9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar



291 is no covering for the head. This forms the costume of a [292] large majority of them. On special occasions or when he goes to public places, he has the same loin cloth, while a richer cloth (*pívu mundu*), somewhat longer and broader, is worn over [464] the upper part of the body. As has already been said, Nayars [177] are to be found in all grades of public service, and these as well as others wear a kind of a neat loin cloth, with a shirt and coat together with a turban to cover the head, while others more fashionable appear in European costume with turbans instead of hats; others again wear hats as well, but their number is few. Among the poorer classes, the loin cloth is not larger than a yard-and-a-half or two by three-fourth of a yard.

302 The men shave their faces and bodies clean, leaving an oval patch of hair on the top of the head, while some grow it over a large surface of the head. In both cases, care is taken to keep the tufts sufficiently long, smooth and oily, and this [177] adds considerably to their neat and handsome appearance; but it is becoming the fashion to crop the hair and to dress it in the fashion of the Europeans.

291 The Nayar women wear an inner garment round the loins and this is covered by an outer garment which is usually two-and-a-half yards in length and one-and-a-half yards in breadth. Sometimes, instead of two cloths, one cloth sufficiently long for the purpose is worn. The dress is white, and sufficiently decent to cover the lower part of the body, and a small upper cloth serves as a covering above the waist. The Nayar women of the present day wear petticoats and cover the upper part of their body [369] with a piece of cloth. It is curious to notice that this form of [178] dress does not find favour (in the rural parts) with the Nambuthiris who are either their landlords or to whom they owe some kind of allegiance or subordination. The absence of any covering for the bosom in ordinary female dress has drawn much ridicule on the Nayars, and this custom has been much mis- [548] understood by foreigners. So far from indicating immodesty, it is looked upon by the people themselves in exactly the opposite light, for among them prostitutes only cover the breasts. "A custom has in it nothing indecent when it is universal," as [171] one of the travellers philosophically remarks (Dall). It is, in [576] fact, a mark of disrespect to one's own elders and betters for either a male or female of the Nayar caste, and of all castes

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans



This no doubt acted as a strong incentive for women not to create a situation which might lead to such unpleasantness, and contributed greatly in forcing the wife to conform to the rules of polyandry in what concerned her.

Were there any illegitimate children in the Thandan community, and what was their fate if there were? I was assured that they would be considered bastards and outcast. It was also said that the man responsible for them might be forced to support them on complaint of the woman to the Collector. This was the only information that I was able to elicit concerning such cases, Panju declining any knowledge of them. The interpreter made it clear, however, that he was only thinking of the case of an unmarried mother. Should she have a child in wedlock from someone other than her husbands, it would be very difficult to prove adultery and the child would certainly be considered legitimate and that of the husbands. It was up to them to decide what they would do with their unfaithful spouse, should they be able to prove her misconduct. Actually, there were no illegitimate children to speak of in the area, my interpreter assured me. An unmarried girl expecting a child would most certainly find a young man or young men to take her to wife, and apart from gossip, nothing serious would come of it. He knew of a few cases like this, he told me, but he preferred not to give me further details, nor let me see them. He had mentioned a woman who had complained to the authorities in such a case, since this had actually happened recently. It was, however, a modern development which did not conform to the traditional patterns of Kerala Thandan culture.

I enquired also about prostitution, and was told that this did exist to some extent in the Thandan caste and in other, higher castes. The last war, with its influx of soldiers from outside, was held responsible for this state of affairs, but also the presence of European planters and administrators. There was little venereal disease, although the authority upon which I was told this was not definitive. It did not seem to me very convincing, coming as it did just after the statement concerning the causes of prostitution in the State.

Birth control was not practised since it was contrary to Hindu religious convictions. Abortions were rare, and it could be seen that the population was increasing steadily and unchecked. There was no female infanticide, and both my informant and my interpreter seemed surprised that I should ask if there were. Women were highly valued in Kerala, they said, and there was no reason not to want them.

Feeling that I would obtain more detailed information concerning the